

STATE OF CONNECTICUT COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

DRAFT

Regular Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 14, 2026

2:00 p.m.

Via Microsoft TEAMS

Commissioners Present

Nicholas Kapoor, Chairperson

Lisa Giliberto

Andrew Norton

Edith Pestana

Joseph Suggs

Tamara Titre

Commissioners Absent

Edward Mambruno, Secretary

Alex Harris

Staff Present

Michelle Dumas Keuler, Legal Managing Director

Shawn Burns, Regional Manager

Cassandra Bretones, HRO Attorney

Johnette Tolliver, State Program Manager

Gary Madison, HRO Representative

Kimberly Jacobsen, Legal Managing Director

Spencer Hill, HRO Attorney

Timothy Lewendon, HRO Attorney

Darcy Strand, Legislative Liaison

Darian Pitts, Executive Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Nicholas Kapoor convened the January 14, 2026, meeting at 2:03 PM.

II. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT & ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Chair Kapoor welcomed and wished everyone a very happy new year and noted that a quorum had been established with six out of eight Commissioners present. He noted that Commissioners Harris and Mambruno were absent.

He also reminded everyone that the meeting is held in public forum, will be posted as such, to please mute their microphones, and to keep their cameras turned off until recognized.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Kapoor appointed Commissioner Giliberto to act as Secretary for the meeting. Commissioner Giliberto asked if there was any discussion on the Minutes as drafted. Seeing none, she then requested a motion to accept the December 10, 2025, Meeting Minutes as written.

To Approve the December 10, 2025, Regular Commission Meeting Minutes:

Motion: E. Pestana

Second: T. Titre

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

IV. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS – VOTE REQUIRED

Presented by Managing Legal Director Attorney Michelle Dumas Keuler

Department of Public Health

Staff representing Department of Public Health were Commissioner Manisha Juthani, Deputy Commissioner Lisa Morrissey, Deputy Commissioner Adelita Orefice, and EEO Manager Mario Garcia.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a), the plan contains all elements required by Sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-94, inclusive and 46a-68-102(b)(3), the agency has demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve goals, and despite these efforts has been unable to do so, and 46a-68-102(b)(4), the agency has substantially addressed deficiencies noted by the Commission in prior plan reviews.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 44 out of 59 possible goals were met or 75%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 11 out of 24 possible goals were met or 46%
- Program Goal Achievement: 3 out of 3 possible goals were met or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2024 Approved; 2023 Approved; 2022 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2020 Approved.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for Department of Public Health and to retain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: E. Pestana

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

Office of Policy and Management

Staff representing the Office of Policy and Management were Secretary Joshua Wojcik, Chief Administrative Officer Yvonne Addo, and Human Resources Generalist 3 Carolyn Kozak.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a), the plan contains all elements required by Sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-94, inclusive and 46a-68-102(b)(3), the agency has demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve goals, and despite these efforts has been unable to do so, and 46a-68-102(b)(4), the agency

had no deficiencies in the prior plan review and therefore, is in compliance with the(b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 11 out of 21 possible goals were met or 52%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 1 out of 1 possible goal was met or 100%
- Program Goals Achievement: 2 out of 2 possible goals were met or 100%.

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2023 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2019 Approved; 2017 Approved; 2015 Approved.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Office of Policy and Management and to retain its Biennial Filing Status:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: J. Suggs

Vote:

Yes:5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

Office of the Secretary of the State

Staff representing the Office of the Secretary of State were Secretary of State Stephany Thomas, EEO/Director of Human Resources Emily Kennedy.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a), the plan contains all elements required by Sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-94, inclusive and 46a-68-102(b)(3), the agency has demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve goals, and despite these efforts has been unable to do so, and 46a-68-102(b)(4), the agency has substantially addressed deficiencies noted by the Commission in prior plan reviews.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 3 out of 6 possible goals were met or 100%
- There were no Promotional Goals set.
- Program Goal Achievement: 2 out of 2 possible goals were met or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2024 Approved; 2023 Approved; 2022 Approved; 2021 Disapproved; 2019 Approved.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for the Office of the Secretary of the State and to move them to Biennial Filing Status from Annual Filing Status:

Motion: A. Norton

Second: J. Suggs

Vote:

Yes:5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

Western Connecticut State University

Staff representing Western Connecticut State University were President Jesse M. Bernal, Chief Diversity, Education & Inclusion Officer/Title IX Coordinator Jennifer Labate, J.D., Chief Human Resources Officer Fred Cratty.

This plan was recommended for approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a), the plan contains all elements required by Sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-94, inclusive and 46a-68-102(b)(3), the agency has demonstrated every good faith effort to achieve goals, and despite these efforts has been unable to do so, and 46a-68-102(b)(4), the agency had no deficiencies in the prior plan review and therefore, is in compliance with the (b)(4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 16 out of 37 possible goals were met or 43%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 7 out of 12 possible goals were met or 58%
- Program Goal Achievement: 3 out of 3 possible goals were met or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2024 Approved; 2023 Disapproved; 2022 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2020 Conditionally Approved.

To Approve the Affirmative Action Plan for Western Connecticut State University and to retain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: J. Suggs

Vote:

Yes:5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

Department Of Emergency Services and Public Protection

Staff representing Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection were Commissioner Ronnell Higgins, Human Resources Officer Attorney Sarah Karwan, Attorney Gwaina Wauldon, Sergeant Tawny Lanati, Human Resources Specialist-EEO Alexis Cortes, Human Resources Specialist-EEO Ashley Burke, DAS HR Business Partner Catherine Downey.

This plan was recommended for conditional approval based on compliance with the following: 46a-68-102(a), the plan contains all elements required by Sections 46a-68-78 through 46a-94, inclusive and 46a-68-102(b)(3), the agency has demonstrated every good faith effort to

achieve goals, and despite these efforts has been unable to do so, and 46a-68-102(b)(4), the agency had no deficiencies in the prior plan review and therefore, is in compliance with the (b) (4) standard.

The Goal Achievement is as follows:

- Hiring Goal Achievement: 26 out of 109 possible goals were met or 24%
- Promotional Goal Achievement: 3 out of 12 possible goals were met or 25%
- Program Goal Achievement: 1 out of 1 possible goal was met or 100%

The five-year approval history is as follows: 2024 Approved; 2023 Approved; 2022 Approved; 2021 Approved; 2020 Approved.

To Reject Staff Recommendation that the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection Affirmative Action Plan to grant Conditional Approval and instead change it to full Approval and to retain its Annual Filing Status:

Motion: A. Norton

Second: T. Titre

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

V. REQUEST TO REOPEN

1. Shamia Warner v. US Renal Dialysis
CHRO Case No. 2530452
Presented by HRO Attorney Timothy Lewendon

To Reopen CHRO case number 2530452, Shamia Warner v. US Renal Dialysis for Purposes of Returning the case to CAR (Case Assessment Review):

Motion: E. Pestana

Second: T. Titre

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

This requires a two-thirds vote of Commissioners present and voting; staff and guests invited to attend must be noted.

1. CHRO ex. rel Matthew Ondrasek v. Brunet & Company Real Estate LLC. & Heritage Pines Condominium Association, Inc. - Housing Election
CHRO Case nos. 2440355 & 2440356

Presented by HRO Attorney Cassandra Bretones

2. Robert Berriault v. CHRO et al
Presented by Assistant Attorney General Laura Thurston

Prior to going into Executive Session Chair Kapoor informed that a separate motion needed to be on record noting that Assistant Attorney General Laura Thurston was unable to attend the meeting and unable to hand the case to another Assistant Attorney General and called for a motion.

To Postpone Discussion and Potential Dispensation of Robert Berriault v. CHRO et al to the February 11, 2026, Commission meeting:

Motion: J. Suggs
Second: L. Giliberto

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

To enter Executive Session and to invite into the Executive Session the following individuals: Managing Attorney Michelle Dumas Keuler, Managing Attorney Kimberly Jacobsen, and Attorney Cassandra Bretones:

Motion: E. Pestana
Second: T. Titre

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried.

The Executive Session began at 3:20 PM.

Commissioners Kapoor, Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs and Titre returned after Executive Session at 3:30 PM.

Chair Kapoor reconvened the Commission Meeting to public session and noted that no actions or votes were taken during the Executive Session.

VII. VOTE ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS

1. CHRO ex. rel Matthew Ondrasek v. Brunet & Company Real Estate LLC. & Heritage Pines Condominium Association, Inc. – Housing Election
CHRO Case Nos. 2440355 & 2440356

To file the cases CHRO ex. rel Matthew Ondrasek v. Brunet & Company Real Estate LLC. & Heritage Pines Condominium Association, Inc. - Housing Election in the Windham Judicial District, to seek injunctive relief, punitive damages, and a civil penalty:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: T. Titre

Discussion: None

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: (0)

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

VIII. DIVISION REPORTS

Executive Director's Report

Managing Legal Director Kimberly Jacobsen reporting on behalf of Executive Director Hughes offered some highlights from her status report and noted that the agency continues to meet with various state agencies to include Labor, EEO, HR, OLR, OAG, BITS, and DOC. There have also been several meetings with Senator Osten to discuss issues occurring within the Department of Corrections.

She added that recruitment efforts are on-going with interviews being held to fill clerical, investigative, HRO Trainee, and attorney positions. Progress continues with implementing the disparity study recommendations. Payment for the entire EEOC contract has been received and deposited. The agency is still waiting to reconnect with HUD and continues to pursue a completed contract from FY 25; however, plans are in the works to hold a fair housing event in April.

Director Jacobsen further reported that monthly manager meetings, agency trainings, and quarterly staff meetings continue. In conclusion she informed that the agency continues to work on its legislative agenda and that the Annual Children's March would take place on Monday, January 19, 2026.

Outreach Report

Outreach Coordinator Ana Mitchell, reporting on behalf of Deputy Executive Director Cheryl Sharp, informed that CHRO has started including the 2025 Community Highlights on its Facebook page to give the community an opportunity to see where/what towns the agency has held its outreach events.

She went on to thank staff for their participation in the agency-wide event held on December 4, 2025. She acknowledged EEOC, CEA (Community Engagement Ambassadors), EAP (Employee Assistance Program) and CHRO Commissioners, Alex Harris, Lisa Giliberto, and Edith Pestana for their presentations during the Retreat.

She further reported on the agency's participation in a national press conference in partnership with Joe Young of the Can-Do movement that was promoting "Kemet: One Nation, Many Journeys" an Immigration Public Service Announcement. She, Deputy Executive Director Cheryl Sharp and Executive Storekeeper Michael Mitchell all participated in the PSA. She noted the

group's participation in a Press Conference held at City Hall honoring National Human Rights Day that also promoted the public service announcement from Can-Do.

Outreach Coordinator Mitchell concluded by reporting the agency's participation in the Analeh Television Production's 16th Annual Holiday Toy Drive and the Annual MLK Children's March scheduled for January 19, 2026.

Legislative Update

Legislative Liaison Darcy Strand reported that work continues on the Disparity Study Recommendations. The group continues its work on new procedures, guidelines, and plans to conduct outreach opportunities to the stakeholders. The Office of Policy and Management has been meeting with impacted agencies, including CHRO, regarding the launch of the contractor database as required under the 2025 bill. Attorneys Spencer Hill and Jonathan Sykes are also working on new contract compliance regulations.

She further reported that the Bond Commission had allotted about \$500,000 to be used to obtain some new software for the Affirmative Action platform.

Darcy concluded that the new legislative session begins the first week of February. The agency's Legislative Committee has been reviewing legislation that impacts the CHRO in preparation for the 2026 Legislative Session.

Legal Update

There were no new cases to report on from the Legal Department.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Chair Kapoor announced the next Commission Meeting will be on Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 2:00 PM. This meeting will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Kapoor asked for a motion to adjourn

To Adjourn:

Motion: L. Giliberto

Second: A. Norton

Vote:

Yes: 5 (Giliberto, Norton, Pestana, Suggs, Titre)

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Did not vote: 1 (Kapoor)

The motion carried

The meeting adjourned at 3:43 PM.